



## ADOT STATEWIDE ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN



### SAFFORD DISTRICT – BENSON AGENCY STAFF WORKSHOP

June 29, 2006 / 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 p.m.

Cochise College – Benson Center  
1025 State Route 90, Benson, Arizona

### ATTENDANCE

Dale Buskirk, *ADOT, TPD Director*

Bill Harmon, *ADOT Safford District Engineer*

Greg Petz, *Graham County*

Philip Ronnerud *Greenlee County*

Heath H. Brown, *Town of Thatcher*

Jeff Schwarz, *City of Bisbee*

Gene Weeks, *SEAGO*

Leonard D. Colwell, *Huachuca City Planning & Zoning*

Dick Schaffer, *Cochise County*

Susan Puzas, *ADOT*

Tom Engel, *ADOT*

Armando J. Membrilla, *ADOT*

### Consultant Staff in Attendance

Rick Ensdorff, *URS*

Caraly Foreman, *URS*

Christina White, *URS*

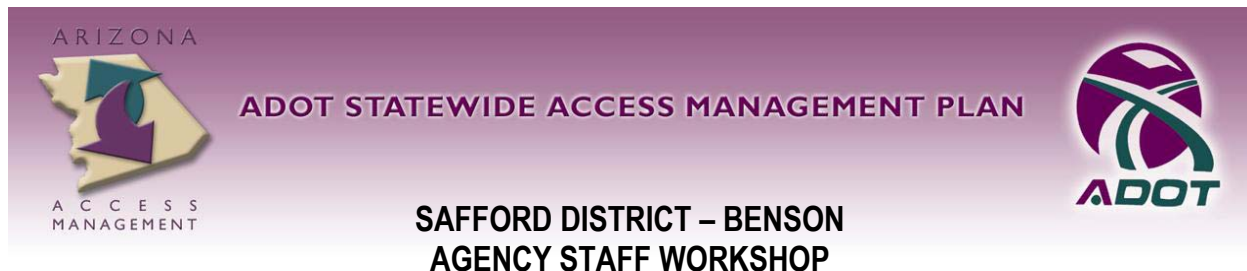
### HANDOUTS:

Agency Outreach Meeting – Agenda (1 page)

Conceptual Access Management Decision Flow Chart (1 page)

Arizona Statewide Access Management Program Overview (pamphlet)

Benefits Of A Statewide Access Management Program For Arizona (pamphlet)



## MEETING SUMMARY

An Agency Staff Workshop of the Statewide Access Management Program project was held on June 28, 2006 at the ADOT Globe District Office Conference Room, US 60, Mile Post No. 253.3, in Globe, Arizona.

### 1. Introductions

Dale Buskirk, ADOT Director, began introductions and gave some information on what the project means, and the importance of stakeholder participation. He stated that as the State grows, it is important that transportation and land use planning be coordinated together. There has always been a relationship between these two spheres, but with growth, it is even more important with the major development that our State and communities are currently being challenged with. He mentioned that one way of accommodating growth is through an implemental program. ADOT does not have zoning authority, local agencies do, so there are two access management components and two critical units (ADOT and locals) necessary to successfully develop and implement a Statewide access management system so that everyone knows the rules and we work as partners. He emphasized that the access management program was not a plan. It will help communities deal with growth from development. It has been very methodical and inclusive as possible. We also have extensive stakeholder involvement, including, in the future, with businesses and developers. Once a draft classification system is developed, ADOT will be coming back to local agencies for comment and feedback.

Reza Karimvand added that after all of the meetings have taken place and the draft has been agreed upon, that the Statewide Access Management Program will still have to be approved by the State Transportation Board (STB) and it will then become a statewide regulation. Dale Buskirk affirmed and noted that when the program is developed and presented to the STB in the summer of 2007 and approved, it will be official.

Bill Harmon noted that the bottom line is that the State of Arizona is “busting at the seams” and that we all need to work together to meet the State’s needs.

Rick Ensdorff asked the attendees to go around the room and introduce themselves. He then gave a quick background of his professional experience. He presented a brief summary of why the program is needed, and talked about the importance and benefits of Access Management Program, how we got to where we are, and provided samples of other efforts like State of Colorado and New Mexico, and the objective of access management. He stressed that in order for this project to work; it would require input from all agencies and there would need to be a partnership between the local agencies and ADOT. He also encouraged participation at any time during the presentation.

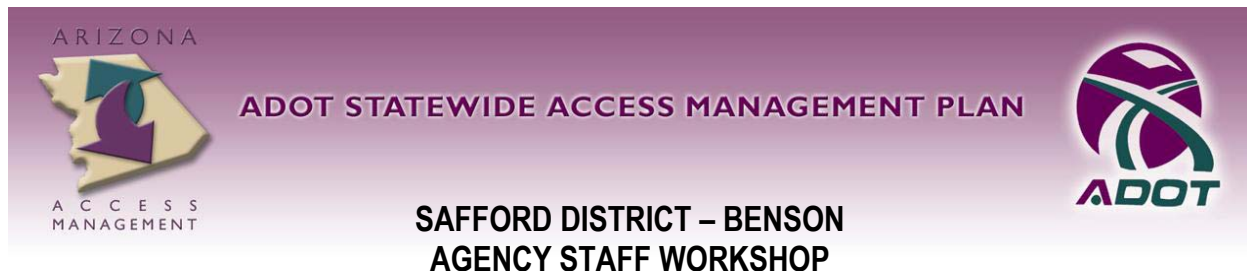
### 2. PowerPoint Presentation

A PowerPoint presentation, which is also available on the project’s website, was presented and discussed the following:

## SAFFORD DISTRICT – BENSON AGENCY STAFF WORKSHOP

- What is Access Management
- Access Features Typically Managed
- Benefits of Access Management
- NHCPR Report 420-Impacts of Access Management Techniques
- Crashes in Arizona, 2003, Access Related Crashes in Arizona
- Policy Initiative
- Arizona Access Management Program Work Flow Diagram and Schedule
- Access Decisions:
  - Access Permitting Process
  - Planning
  - Local Agencies
  - ADOT Construction Practices
  - Arizona Highway Projects
  - Right of Way Activities
  - Transportation Board
  - Traffic and Safety Programs
- Vision Statement
- Program Objectives
- Local Agency Perspective on Access Management
- How a Statewide Access Management Program will work.
- Conceptual Access Management Decision Flow Chart
- ADOT/Local Agency Coordination
- Classification System
- Access Classifications: The Heart of the Program
- Hierarchy of Access Classifications
- Access Classification Considerations
- Colorado Classification System
- Key Design Elements
- Waiver/Variance Process
- Other Considerations: Access Management Plans, Interim Permit Approval
- Brief Your Local Officials
- Business and Development Community Participation
- District Agency Outreach

The project's Vision Statement was discussed. Rick Ensdorff explained that we need to have a framework but it needs flexibility and a way to deal with "gray areas". Keep the program consistent and reliable while allowing local flexibility to manage access decisions over time. Critical to the success of this program is partnerships and a consistent approach to access management.



Rick Ensdorff briefly discussed the project's schedule, highlighting milestones, meetings and working with attendees to develop a program that best meets both the state highway system's and local government's needs.

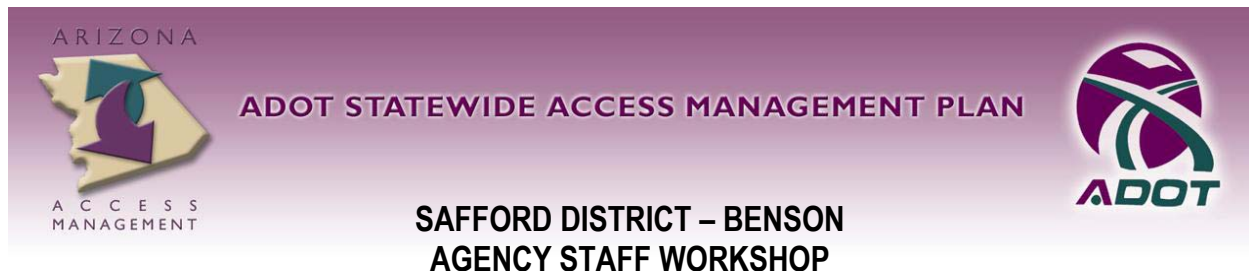
Rick Ensdorff explained that Access Management is defined as a systematic management of location, spacing and design of access roads and access points. Access Management includes state highways. The benefits of Access Management were further explained, including Safety, Mobility, and Economic. He noted that economic elements / benefits may not be initially seen, particularly with development requests, but other state experiences (he provided examples) have shown that an implemented access management plan has long-term benefits on impacted areas.

In discussing safety benefits, Rick Ensdorff pointed out that the data shows that the more access points / curb cuts there are, the less safe the roadway is – more crashes per mile. Access Management accidents are defined as occurring at a driveway and state roadway, or, at an intersection and state roadway. Although currently unavailable, he hopes to have specific data for Arizona to share with agencies in the near future. The goal in Safety would be to reduce the incident of car crashes in a 50%, increase pedestrian and cyclists safety and to increase roadway capacity 23-45%.

Rick Ensdorff noted that the agency outreach conducted, so far, has revealed that the procedures and policies are not consistent and do not have enough "teeth". The Access Management plan is to have all state highways designated with classifications. This workshop, and the previously held similar workshops, is the first key milestone in this project. This project is planned for June 2007 completion. The Management plan consists of several pieces - as outlined in the Access Decisions slide - it's not just permits. Access Management will be an everyday tool that will support long-term use and consistency.

Gene Weeks asked how downstream from state highway access and development along other communities would this program affect. Rick Ensdorff replied that evolution in any community might start from rural to developed areas and that there is a functional safety limit that ADOT has to be conscious of. Finding a balance to still meet local capacity, however, is key. The access management program will address those issues. Greg Petz added that they are dealing with rural to heavy-duty commercial development and that there is a critical need to try to balance state highway capacity to handle it.

Rick Ensdorff went on to discuss the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) establishment and composition. The TAC involves representatives from the following agencies, including ADOT, state engineers, senior staff, district engineers, local agencies, MPOs, and other public agency and entity leaders. He also highlighted progress made so thus far with the TAC, the Attorney General's Office legal review, Current State of Practice, et al.



Rick Ensdruff then walked through the Work Flow Diagram. He mentioned that the Access Management has many benefits and again stressed that ADOT and local agencies need to start a partnership as that will be the key to make this program a success.

Bill Harmon asked Rick Ensdruff to touch on Arizona's legal authority, especially as previous subsection is that if ADOT did not provide or purchase access; ADOT was obliged to provide it.

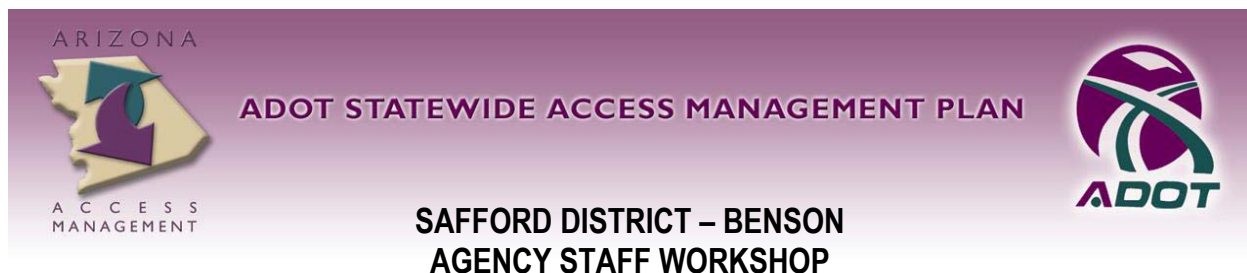
Rick Ensdruff stated that during the meeting, this will be discussed. Also, we prepared a White Paper with the Attorney General's Office that addresses this that is on the project website. The State is required to provide "reasonable" access. The key is the definition of reasonable that is what this program will define throughout the process. What has been found across the states implementing a program has been that there has been positive participation. Regarding the strategic acquisition of access rights part of the question, no state has enough money to buy all access rights. That's why this program needs to be balanced.

Gene Weeks asked if the term "taking" (of property rights) is part of this process. Rick Ensdruff responded that the concept is, and that the program will address this, as well as "takings". He stated that there needs to be a process in place to understand those responsibilities (the property owner and their rights) and roles of ADOT and local entities that is sensitive to those rights, while providing a safe and efficient roadway and access system. In the balance between property owners and the State, the State is not obligated to provide a dangerous and unsafe roadway. A solid program must be developed to deal with these situations in a safe and efficient roadway system way.

Philip Ronnerud asked how are past problems going to be addressed on a program basis to ensure that the state system is running? Are we building a program and/or putting one in place and then hoping it works? Some things have been planned with things developed in the past and some locals feel that that they have lost opportunities and then it becomes hard to correct- costs, for example.

Reza Karimvand noted that the issue of access management really came from a problem that we have had occurring statewide. From his perspective, development is taking over the State in one shot. Also, from his perspective, we can control and manage development and access rights on the State Highway System through this program and, also, try to respond as current and future growth takes place in Arizona. He asked attendees, hypothetically, "are we going to put all of our money into going back and fixing old designed standards and systems? No." The program is not retroactive. However, it will control access and be a response to future growth changes. As opportunities arise in the system (including land owner or land use changes, for example), local governments will be faced with dealing with them to meet new needs, how to fix areas. Dale Buskirk interjected and added that the access management program cannot and will not be ex post facto. What has occurred has occurred. This is a forward-looking policy regulation. Where there are opportunities to change things that are substandard, we can, although it will not be a guarantee and it is





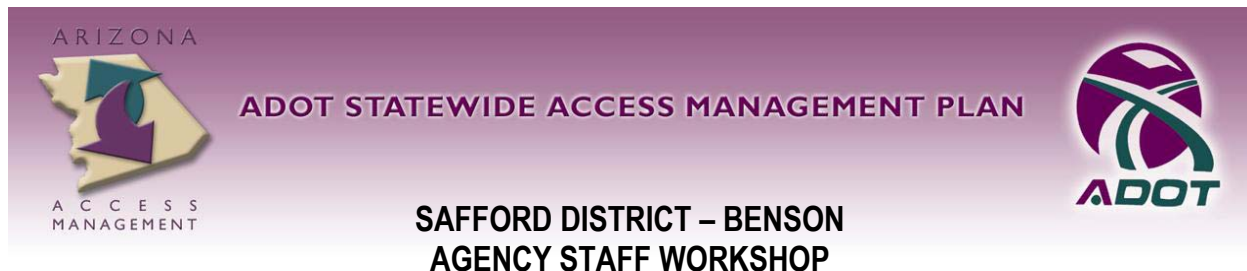
not part of the program to retroactively fix past segments. We will look at segments as they change and at new ones.

Philip Ronnerud asked if ADOT would give local agencies resources? Dale Buskirk responded with a good example in which ADOT did do this and it was a successful partnership. Bill Harmon noted that for future scoping efforts, we will look at what needs to be done, including buy-out, with access management. Rick Ensdorff commented that this is a “forward-looking” program that, over time, changes the way ADOT and locals do business. Greg Petz reiterated Rick Ensdorff’s comments that it is a cooperative effort that works over time, be it in looking at curb cuts, bypasses, etc. Bill Harmon added that, in watching Southeastern Arizona evolve, access management may involve much more than curbed medians.

Philip Ronnerud also added that one thing not mentioned is that people are using right-of-way (pedestrians, bicycles, equestrians) on the State Highway in their [Greenlee] County. This type of use and access management needs to be at the planning decisions stage. Rick Ensdorff replied that these types of decisions will be part of the program, particularly in the design guidelines and decision tree processes. Greg Petz noted that this will give locals a “straight up” of what is expected and cooperatively before it gets to the District Engineer so this program will further support the locals. Rick Ensdorff added that the program will serve as an everyday tool to support your local and regional planning. For example, every day that a permit is requested and issued, it will be looked at from a bigger picture perspective and need.

Rick Ensdorff then discussed the Decision Flow Chart slide. He indicated that the development of the Access Management has not been developed and that it will be by working with those in the room and additional resources. He also mentioned that Access Management plans are in place in the following states, Colorado, New Jersey, Florida and some in New Mexico and that Arizona can benefit from their experience. He emphasized that the term flexibility is not meant to be used in terms of affecting the decisions. It is meant to be used in terms of ways to “get” to those desired outcomes in providing a safe and efficient system and in supporting partnerships with ADOT, locals, and stakeholders. It is a program that is meant to be both developed and implemented. The State Transportation Board mandated a policy [*State Transportation Board Policy 12: Access Management Policy, August 15, 2003*] that requires ADOT-driven outreach with regional planning agencies and local governments to encourage planning coordination and early notification to ADOT of zoning and other land use decisions that will impact the State Highway System.

Bill Harmon noted that a lot of smaller communities use the Arizona League of Cities and Towns use planning and zoning model ordinances. Other cities have their own planning and zoning ordinances regarding access points. The issue is that many of them “arbitrarily” enforce or do not enforce them. He used the example of when a “big box” [*def.: of, relating to, or being a large chain store having a boxlike structure*] comes into town and offers a small town a big sales tax base - an opportunity that cities would be attracted to and that are competitive to get. He has seen that this will be challenging, especially in future meetings where elected officials, etc. will be attending, in gaining their commitment for the program.



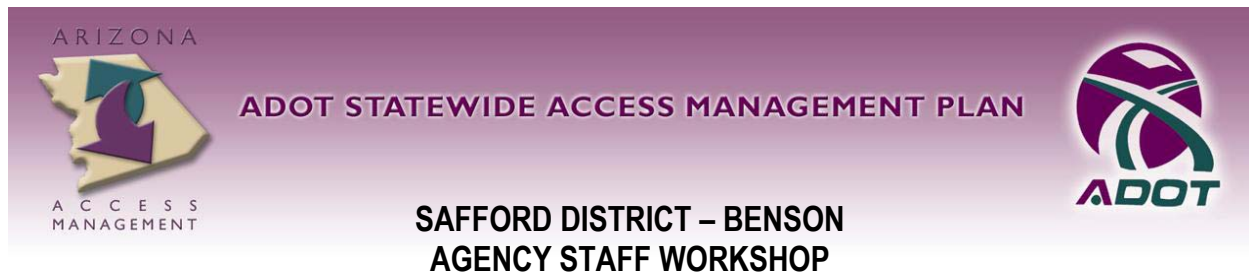
He also sees it as a challenge where these types of opportunities arise during times of growing pains, not only in using and following their own planning and zoning ordinances, but in using the access management program - especially them weighing and seeing the benefits of following them for the long-term. Gene Weeks concurred, adding that this is similar to the example he was referring to earlier in the Workshop. Rick Ensdorff responded that consistency in approach and to design elements is a key factor when making decisions related to or impacting access management to the State Highway System. He reiterated his earlier comments that ADOT is responsible, statewide, for the efficiency and safety of the State Highway System.

Bill Harmon noted that the access management program is a modest proposal. He provided a successful project example in which ADOT and the City of Benson worked together to split costs to include an access management plan. He made an offer to be willing to discuss cost sharing with any other locals to look at corridor management and access management plan proposals for mutual impacted areas.

Reza Karimvand noted that the access management program is more of a conceptual plan that came from SR 347 (City of Maricopa) where all of a sudden, developers wanted to build north and south. Developers were asked to put up money to provide a third through-lane, they did, and it was successful. When the next developers came, they were to continue on that development. Developers were asked to either dedicate the right-of-way or build the roads. For SR 247 and SR 387 in Casa Grande, the consultant was asked to provide an conceptual access plan which defines needed right-of-way. Even developers with permits were asked to set aside rights-of-way in a formal letter. ADOT and local agencies were on the same side so that the developers were clear on their options. This is also the same for SR 90. Gene Weeks noted that these were examples of partnership agreements between agencies. Rick Ensdorff agreed and noted that they were formalized via intergovernmental agreements (IGAs).

Dick Schaffer complimented ADOT on what he has observed between ADOT and local agencies in Cochise County. For small towns, especially off of SR 90, he sees a need for corridor analysis for SR 90 and SR 92. ADOT involved his agency and Cochise County will not release a permit for development along the highway without approval from ADOT.

Philip Ronnerud noted that the differences between urban and rural communities in the District are significant. He provided lot splits as an example of one of those issues of how a new access point(s), such as driveways, can have volume effects. Once this happens and they get a permit from ADOT, it is often too late for locals to meet their needs. Rick Ensdorff replied that timing and coordinating will be discussed in greater detail further into the presentation.



Gene Weeks asked who, in this program, would issue permits to access of the highway if there were a town or a city issue such as a building permit? So that local communities and ADOT do not clash, what happens? Armando Membrila answered that the District Office of ADOT issues permits. He also acknowledged that there have been local cases in which these situations have happened. He stated that the process has worked well with Cochise County, but he has seen, recently, where more rural counties are now on or will be more experiencing these coordination issues and needs. He offered to meet with locals even before the access management program is implemented, to sit with any local agency to best move forward together in communication and coordination so that all needs can be met. Rick Ensdruff complimented the group for their “thinking through” issues even ahead of the process.

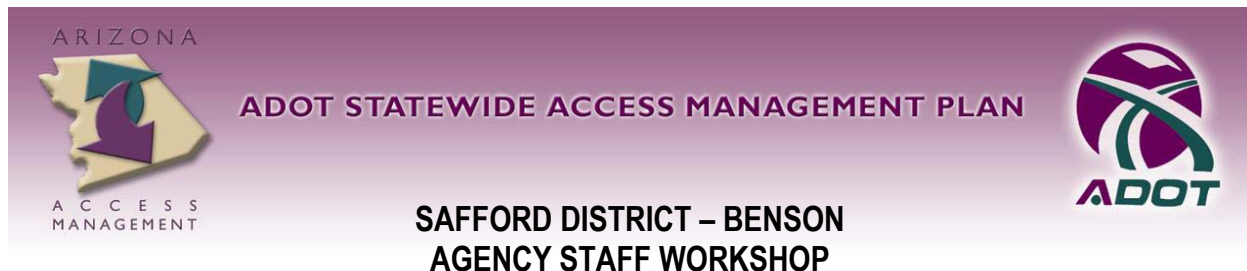
Rick Ensdruff continued on with the presentation, discussing and showing examples of what the Statewide Access Management Program might look like, as well as emphasizing discussions on the importance of ADOT and local agency coordination. He noted that these kind of efforts are currently going on, just at different levels throughout the State.

Dick Schaffer commented that corridor plans, especially in relation to empty land, is so important in knowing and providing guidelines on decisions that need to occur – now and long-term.

Rick Ensdruff then proceeded to the “Classifications” slide in the presentations, noting that this is the heart of the program and what will provide day to day permitting action tools that support state and regional local transportation plans. It will also tie to fit local planning conditions and efforts. He went on to provide some background experience in this area. He also included additional Fort Collins experience examples, such as where the developers actually did homework before applying for a permit based on the classification system, which prevented “the wheel from being reinvented each time.” He also added that a classification system 1) Determines your expected performance, and 2) Provides day-to-day permitting actions that support the state and local transportation plans. Determining the classification process will be interactive between agencies and ADOT. He emphasized that every access decision affects the performance of the State Highway System, so we need to manage it in a safe and efficient way.

Rick Ensdruff showed the partial Excel spreadsheet for the state of Colorado’s classification. There are circumstances that require flexibility, but those would be unique - not the everyday circumstances. As an example, in Colorado 90% of the time it is clear (due to the classification process and guidelines), but there are those instances 10% of the time where a more flexible option is needed. The clear and defined process at the core will limit those unique circumstances, however, it is known that throughout the project some tweaks will be needed. Rick Ensdruff again outlined the projects deadlines, the final report, including the classifications, which would be complete in June 2007.



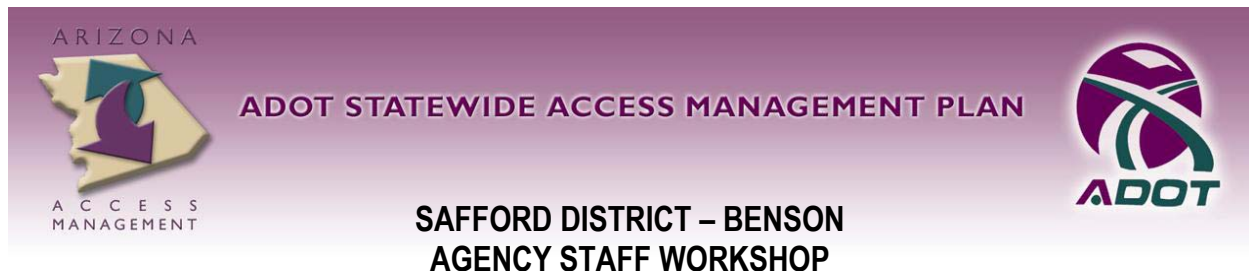


As for amending or changing a classification after it has been approved, Rick Ensdorff pointed out it is a rigorous process. Everyone, the locals, ADOT, and State Transportation Board have to agree to these changes. Changing a classification is not common. In Colorado, there were only six changes to classifications in the first 10 years, and the majority of those were due to changes in land use.

Rick Ensdorff went on to outline some possible Arizona classifications. The plan is to have these mostly complete by the end of this summer. For the next workshop, there will be some real road examples and classifications. Rick Ensdorff also hopes to have examples for each specific to the area. So as not to surprise those at the meeting with this information for the first time, the plan is to update the website and send out correspondence. If you have attended this meeting you will be contacted with updates regarding this project.

Gene Weeks asked if once the classification stage is reached, would other agencies such as AASHTO, SHPO, etc. have to sign off on them? Rick Ensdorff answered that AASHTO standards and guidelines will definitely be an important part of the design guidelines. They are part of the review process. As in most states, the DOT has final authority in deciding and determining encroachment guidelines.

Phillip Ronnerud asked about the rigidity of the category assignments. Rick Ensdorff responded that once passed, it would be very rigid. Changes can be proposed but it is a rigorous process that will need cooperation between agencies. The perception of bureaucracy being needed to make a change could potentially upset groups such as developers. Dale Buskirk mentioned the Town of Maricopa as an example. Not so many years ago, it was a small town of about 300 people. SR 347 only had with two-lanes. Developers came in and no one thought about the road. Now there are thousands of homes and people, mostly commuters going into Phoenix who are now upset and are complaining about massive traffic congestion. Development that is not coordinated with the transportation system results in high traffic volumes. This is an example of where planning and setting early standards would have prevented current retrofitting needs. Philip Ronnerud responded that 20 years ago, no one could have foreseen such an event occurring or these categories changed and needing to be changed. Rick Ensdorff responded that the difference would be that changing classification categories will not be developer-driven on an individual-basis but, instead, it would be agency-driven. With the Statewide Access Management Program in place, design guidelines will occur early in the process. Currently, most access management plans, for Arizona, are done during construction. With this program, land use plans might have to be changed or updated but the process would be that ADOT and the locals coordinate making necessary changes. Where to accommodate partnerships with local government is where we want to go. In an implemented program, the locals often first change their land use plans, provide this to the DOT, and then the DOT works with the agencies to accommodate the needs.



Bill Harmon noted that within the next 12 months, categories and maps would be developed and design standards set and adopted by the State Transportation Board. He wanted to know, for example, if he as a District Engineer, or, say, if Reza Karimvand would no longer have authority to change these classifications or categories unless they went through a formal process of change. He acknowledged that this would mean that ADOT and local agencies would need to buckle down together, especially in communicating to local staff and officials who will be impacted, particularly those with State Highway System routes in their area(s). We need to let them know what we are doing and how they can get involved in developing the program.

Dale Buskirk noted that we will be sending out letters to elected officials. We are also forming a business / development community focus group, in which the group will meet later this summer. He also stressed the importance in receiving the attendees' feedback, as well.

Armando Membrila asked if general public meetings will be held later. Dale Buskirk replied that later in the process, communication to the public will be part of the process.

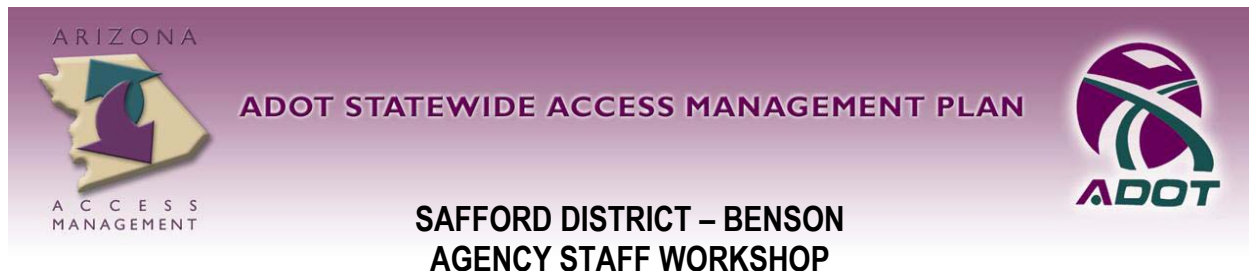
Gene Weeks asked what the protocol would be in giving the State Transportation Board change recommendations. Dale Buskirk responded that final classification categories will be provided to them next year and that there will also be protocols in place to, as needed, change categories.

Someone then inquired, "Doesn't the demographics of the State dictate where development can take place?" Rick Ensdorff replied that it is one of many factors in determining this. Greg Petz commented that there is land adjacent to ADOT right-of-way that is planned to be developed by developers that has lot splits, even for agriculture. Philip Ronnerud added that he sees the potential for such groups as farmers and developers going to elected officials / the legislature to protest the program. Dale Buskirk replied that this program is not one that is adversarial, but is one that is developed as a benefit to these involved parties.

Gene Weeks asked where roundabouts may come into play in this program. Rick Ensdorff responded that they have become more of a viable option to consider. We will work with locals, ADOT, and others to ensure that those design options and considerations are reviewed and are included in the design elements review process.

Armando Membrila asked if this will be an all-inclusive process that will, for example, include frontage roads and access to frontage roads. Rick Ensdorff replied that yes, especially in their performance and how they will be used over time.

Bill Harmon asked if having a statewide access management program has discouraged development. Rick Ensdorff replied no, it just changes the dynamics. The developers do their homework ahead of the game using the classification categories and design guidelines so that they can move approvals through the process faster and more cost effectively. Philip Ronnerud agreed, adding that he has also found that



developers actually like having the program in place because they, early-on, know what is expected and needed from them. Armando Membrilla commented that he sees this program as especially helping rural agencies have something as guidance or leverage to approve or deny a permit without planning and zoning to ADOT-to-local coordination obstacles and issues. Rick Ensorff added that the program still provides ADOT and local agencies with coordination and partnership options and opportunities, including the option for interim permit approvals to help better manage routes over time.

Rick Ensorff went on to discuss the next steps and action items needed for the project to move forward. As Dale Buskirk had mentioned earlier in the presentation, he reiterated the importance of us leaving them with homework to go back to their organizations and to brief their local agencies and officials, especially the elected officials and senior management, about this Access Management Program. It would also be helpful to engage the business and development community. A letter, from ADOT, is being drafted and will be sent to elected officials. Rick Ensorff informed the group that the officials will have additionally available to them CDs, brochures, handouts, and the website as a resource and means of participation.

Rick Ensorff discussed the upcoming district outreach meetings schedule for the project. He stated that the next series would be in September and October for Classification Orientation and in March and April of 2007 for the Implementation Briefings.

The Access Management information can be found on the ADOT Planning site under [http://tpd.azdot.gov/planning/am\\_statewideplan.php](http://tpd.azdot.gov/planning/am_statewideplan.php). In addition to the website, Rick Ensorff mentioned that attendees could obtain answers and provide comments through the email address from which Caraly Foreman had set up and from which the invitations were sent: [ADOT\\_SAMP\\_Project@urscorp.com](mailto:ADOT_SAMP_Project@urscorp.com).

Rick Ensorff then asked for feedback on the value of this presentation to the attendees and asked for suggestions for the future ones. No additional comments were received at this time.

Gene Weeks noted that October 12<sup>th</sup> is the next [SEAGO] TAC meeting, and asked if the team would like to brief/present to them. Rick Ensorff and Dale Buskirk noted that they would look at the schedule to check availability.

Rick Ensorff concluded that he would be emailing everyone and initiating contact for feedback from all involved parties, including businesses and other participants of focus groups, and to discuss upcoming meetings.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting ended at 11:50 a.m.